

1949.

ANNUAL REPORT  
ON THE HEALTH  
OF THE  
COWES URBAN DISTRICT

BY

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COUNTY HALL,  
NEWPORT, I.W.

September, 1950.

*To the Members of the Cowes Urban District Council :—*

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report on the health of the District for the year 1949.

The birth rate (17.2 per 1000) and the death rate (13.0 per 1000) showed a slight increase on the birth and death rates for 1948. Infantile mortality increased from 14.5 per 1000 to 24.9.

The number of notifications of infectious disease increased from 131 in 1948 to 269 in 1949, largely due to an outbreak of Measles and Food Poisoning.

PROBLEM FAMILIES. The district contains a number of families, discussed by Professor Stevenson under Problem Families in his Social Medicine.

A strict connotation is to be understood by the term problem family though accurate definition is difficult so that incidences as calculated by different observers are hardly comparable from area to area. The essential feature of a problem family is that the standard of living is shocking and that the parents make no effort to improve these conditions; there are not even low standards which they strive to attain.

Such homes are dirty, far beyond scrupulous cleanliness. The bedding is foul and unemptied chamber pots or tins in lieu are commonplace. When a window is broken or a piece of furniture collapses, nothing is done about it. Floors are either bare or the covering tattered and they are filthy and engrained with tramped in food and human and animal excreta. Such families frequently keep three or four dogs and cats in various stages of emaciation. The animals sleep on or in the beds with the human occupants and pass their excreta upon the bedding, floors, stairs, etc.



A LOCAL PROBLEM FAMILY.

Furniture is of the scantiest and the sleeping arrangements totally inadequate so that ages and sexes are not separated and the floor has to serve for those who cannot crowd into the rickety beds.

Cookery arrangements are primitive and often hired apparatus has been removed for non-payment. In any event cooking is of the simplest and seldom advances beyond making tea.

The type of people who make such homes are remarkable and their behaviour is more so. The children are unkempt, dirty and intermittently verminous so that they are well known to the School Authorities. They usually suffer from chronic catarrh and they are strangers to handkerchiefs. The parents are shiftless and indolent but while they neglect their children, deliberate cruelty has not been shown to be characteristic. Many children from the most disorderly homes are perfectly happy. The importance of the irresolute and inco-ordinate way in which the family acts has been stressed. Nothing is kept in its own fixed place. While one member of the family prepares a meal, the rest of the family watch idly and make no attempt to help. Joint action in any project is impossible. Arrangements or planning for the morrow is impossible. Money is spent as soon as it is available and spent unwisely. Meals are eaten at irregular intervals and there is a tendency for each to feed when he feels inclined.

In such a family time means little. The children are late for school and late in bed. The wage earner often loses a day for bad time-keeping. Usually such people are not proud and will readily agree that improvements are necessary, but will raise all sorts of difficulties, promise to do better and quietly forget a visit from the M.O.H., Sanitary Inspector or Social Worker.

While a majority of these families are living on a low income and the wage earner is commonly unskilled, money is by no means the commonest determining factor. Their neighbours can manage on the same income to make decent homes and many families on smaller incomes are not in need of constant supervision.

Problem families may come into being as the result of the union of two persons of average intelligence but in a substantial number of these families their plight is determined by low intelligence in the parents, especially that of the mothers. A mother of low mentality needs everything in her favour if she is to make any shape at a decent home.

The prevention of such families is difficult. General improvement in social conditions, social insurance and the widening of the scope of social and medical services leave such families relatively unaffected.

Those families due to low intellectual ability should not exist, the females being supervised and controlled under the Mental Deficiency Acts.

The education of children in the accomplishments which help to build homes should counteract to a considerable degree the passing on from generation to generation of the habits acquired in an atrocious environment.

Activities appropriate more or less directly to character forming, especially towards unselfish service for other such as Girl Guides, is likely to do much good.

It is very much easier to help a family before it has completely collapsed. Every effort must be made to find families in trouble as early as possible. All Local Authority Officers, voluntary workers, clergymen, policemen, probation officers, landlords, etc., have or should have an understanding of this social question.



The first step towards helping a problem family is to analyse as far as possible the cause which have led to such a state.

It is essential if at all possible that the family should be preserved as a family.

It is easy to pay lip service to the conception of the family as the proper place for bringing up children, even if it is bad, on the assumption that the alternatives are likely to be no improvement, and then to take steps to take the children away as a simple obvious measure.

The children and the parents need to be treated as a family unit. The confidence of the parents must be gained. An organised descent on the house by "experts" to study the "specimens" is not the best way to begin.

The person who is likely to know the family best and who should continue to visit the family for years, and certainly after the concentrated effort to get the home going again is the Health Visitor.

The Health Visitor is the logical person to gain the confidence of the family and to persuade the members to take the first few difficult steps in co-operation. She is less likely to strike a false note or raise suspicions of organised interference than an outsider.

There are five such families under observation in Cowes.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN MILLS,

*Medical Officer of Health.*

## PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS, 1949.

Medical Officer of Health :—

JOHN MILLS, M.D., Ch.B., M.R.C.S. (Eng.), L.R.C.P.  
(Lond.), D.P.H.

Sanitary Inspector :—

J. W. BROMLEY, M.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.

### GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area in acres ... ..	5542
No. of inhabited houses (end of 1949) per rate books	6130
Rateable value ... ..	£108,564
Sum represented by a penny rate ... ..	£431

### SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

These are unchanged since the last report.

### EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS.

Population (Registrar General's Figures) ... ..	16,360
Live birth rate per 1000 of the estimated resident population ... ..	17.2
Still birth rate per 1000 total (live and still) births ...	37.7
Death rate per 1000 of the estimated resident population ... ..	13.0
Puerperal death rate per 1000 total (live and still) births ... ..	Nil

Infantile Mortality :—

All infants per 1000 live births ... ..	24.9
Legitimate infants per 1000 legitimate births ...	22.5
Illegitimate infants per 1000 illegitimate births ...	71.4
Deaths from Cancer (all ages) ... ..	38
Deaths from Measles (all ages) ... ..	Nil
Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages) ... ..	Nil
Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age) ...	Nil

### BIRTHS.

The total number of live births was 281, giving a live birth rate per 1000 living of 17.2, the corresponding rate for England and Wales being 16.7.



## DEATHS.

The number of deaths was 212 giving a death rate of 13.0 per 1000 of the estimated resident population. The corresponding rate for England and Wales was 11.7.

## INFANTILE MORTALITY.

The Infantile Mortality rate was 24.9 per 1000 registered live births, the rate for England and Wales being 32.0.

## DIPHTHERIA.

Far too many parents are failing to have their babies immunized against this most deadly and crippling disease.

Only 40.7 per cent. of children under five are protected and though 67.4 per cent. of children of school age have been immunised, this figure is still too low.

## INFANTILE PARALYSIS.

2 cases.

## WATER SUPPLY.

In West Cowes water is supplied from a deep well and from land drained water passing into large open reservoirs. It also has a supply from Newport.

Bacteriological examination of the water in the open reservoirs showed varying degrees of pollution with Coli-Aerogenes organisms of both surface soil and faecal type. After filtration through pressure sand filters followed by chlorination, no evidence of harmful pollution was found.

The raw water from the Broadfields Pumping Station on two occasions showed slight pollution with Coli-Aerogenes bacteria of the surface soil type, but tests after chlorination showed no evidence of harmful pollution.

Examinations made of the West Cowes main supply and chlorinated water from the filter house, were satisfactory, bacteriologically.

The water supply to East Cowes is from both a deep well and from the Newport supply. The supply from the deep well is too hard and too saline and should be abandoned at the earliest opportunity. Quarterly examination of the raw and treated water revealed no evidence of harmful pollution.

The number of samples examined was 33; 20 for Bacteriological and 10 for Chemical examination, 8 for East Cowes Well and 5 for Threadworms at West Cowes.

5,488 dwelling houses, with an estimated population of 15,930, are supplied with water from the water mains, and 50 dwelling houses with approximately 300 population are supplied by means of stand-pipes.

#### ICE CREAM.

Close supervision of the manufacturers and retailers of Ice Cream have been maintained and the products controlled by weekly analyses. Any samples of Ice Cream which failed to come up to standard were closely investigated and the cause found and remedied.

There are two manufacturers, and fifty-seven retailers of which the majority sell prepacked Ice Cream.

Sixty-five samples were procured and submitted for bacteriological examination and were graded as follows:—

Grade 1	...	55
„ 2	...	4
„ 3	...	4
„ 4	...	2

#### SWIMMING POOLS.

The Swimming Pool water at Gurnard Pines Holiday Camp was subjected to regular analysis and was found to be satisfactory.

## DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

A recurring nuisance is caused in Cowes by the presence of crude sewage in the harbour and in the sea along the adjacent foreshore.

More especially, the mud and seaweed on the foreshore at East Cowes is impregnated with sewage deposits and at low states of the tide and especially during hot weather, an unpleasant effluvia is given off and is disseminated over a fairly wide area.

The difficulty in correcting this position is the fact that there are very numerous sea outfalls for the sewage, some owned by the Council but others which are private property. Owing to the topographical difficulties and the very great expense involved in a new sewage scheme it is impossible at the moment to make any major alteration for the improvement of these conditions.

The state of the harbour has been aggravated by fractures in the existing outfalls but these are repaired as they occur.

The problem is not a new one and has been present for at least fifty years.

## HOUSING.

Young people contemplating marriage are daunted by the prospect of living with in-laws, or strangers in various degrees of overcrowding. A difficult period of readjustment is rendered more difficult by the absence of privacy and a home of one's own. Dark, damp, overcrowded houses with more than one family thrown together are producing a state of nervous tension and exhaustion in both men and women which is reflected in the number of cases of neurosis seen by the medical practitioners.

The Councils are doing everything in their power to provide excellent, well appointed and well built houses for all the families in their area but the necessary rate of supply is so

slow that a long vista of years of waiting is the best that can be offered in many cases to those who are expected to produce the future citizens.

Mixed families living together get on "each others nerves." The harassed mother in many cases is prone to "take it out" of her husband and children. This unhappiness in the home frequently drives the husband to the 'pub' and the children to the psychiatrist.

Not until there are good houses for everyone, together with a good standard of living, measured in terms of good food, exercise and contentment, and not by the possession of a radio-gram or television set, will we expect to see a significant increase in the birthrate.

## HOUSING.

Two hundred and twenty two houses were inspected under the Public Health and Housing Acts, 1936, and as a result various defects were found in all the houses.

Two hundred and nine dwelling houses have been put into a fit state by informal notices under the Public Health and Housing Acts, 1936, leaving fifteen houses where repairs had not been completed.

Nine Statutory Notices under the Public Health and Housing Acts, 1936, were served during the year and these were all complied with in the time stated.

One Statutory Notice was served under Section 11 of the Housing Act, 1936, 3 houses were demolished as the result of notices served in 1948.

One owner failed to comply with Statutory Notice under Section 9 for four houses, the work having been carried out by the Council in default.

426 visits were made as routine inspection of all Council Houses and Council owned property.

During the year 40~~0~~ new houses were built by the Council and all have been occupied.

## FACTORIES ACT, 1937.

Particulars of the administration of the Factories Act, 1937,  
Parts I and VIII administered by the Council.

### PART I OF THE ACT.

#### 1.—INSPECTIONS for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors).

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Inspections	Written notices	Occupiers prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	46	37	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	22	19	—	—
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises)	14	12	—	—
Total ...	82	68	—	—

### FOOD HYGIENE.

The Department continues to educate food handlers on the hygiene of food, by talks, literature and demonstration. Conditions in food shops have improved but there are still many offenders. The public, themselves, who are the victims if food is contaminated can do much to help the Clean Food Campaign. If they are served in a restaurant with badly cracked cups, with lip-stick round the edge, dirty knives, forks with the residue of a previous meal still adherent between the prongs, they should send them back. There seems great reluctance on the part of the customer to take such action.

## 2.—CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND.

(If defects are discovered at the premises on two, three or more separate occasions they are reckoned as two, three or more "cases.")

Particulars	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
	Found	Remedied	Referred		
			To H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	6	6	—	—	—
Overcrowding (S.2) ...	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable temperature (S.3) ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate ventilation (S.4) ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6) ... ..	1	1	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)					
(a) insufficient... ..	—	—	—	1	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective ... ..	2	2	—	—	—
(c) not separate for sexes	1	1	—	—	—
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork) ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Total ...	10	10	—	1	—

## PART VIII OF THE ACT.

### OUTWORK. (Sections 110 and 111.)

Nature of Work	Section 110			Section 111		
	No. of out-workers in August list required by Sect 110 (1) (c)	No. of cases of default in sending lists to the Council	No. of prosecutions for failure to supply lists	No. of instances of work in unwholesome premises	Notices served	Prosecutions
Wearing } Making, etc. apparel } Cleaning and washing	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lampshades	179	—	—	—	—	—
Other classes of work	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total ...	179	—	—	—	—	—



## INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

All animals are slaughtered at Government controlled Slaughter Houses in Newport or Wroxall.

When carcases and offal arrive at Allocation Centre, weekly inspection is again carried out before being passed on to local butchers.

### UN SOUND FOOD.

The following table shows the amount of unsound food dealt with during the year : —

					lbs.
Hind Quuarter Beef	...	...	...	...	714
Forequarter	...	...	...	...	70
Lambs Livers	...	...	...	...	16 $\frac{1}{4}$
Ox Liver	...	...	...	...	21
Luncheon Meat	...	...	...	...	24
Sausage Meat	...	...	...	...	21
Cereal Sausage	...	...	...	...	36
Sausages	...	...	...	...	15
Whale Meat Sausages	...	...	...	...	5
Bacon	...	...	...	...	77 $\frac{1}{2}$
Turkeys (10)	...	...	...	...	70
Shrimps	...	...	...	...	28
Crabs	...	...	...	...	28
Smoked Haddock	...	...	...	...	104
Kippers	...	...	...	...	42
Plaice	...	...	...	...	104
Fresh Haddock	...	...	...	...	35
Fresh Herrings	...	...	...	...	56
Figs	...	...	...	...	56
Sugar	...	...	...	...	98 $\frac{1}{2}$
Biscuits	...	...	...	...	24
Flour	...	...	...	...	81
Sago	...	...	...	...	30
Fruit Cake	...	...	...	...	7

					lbs.
Fish Cakes (114)	...	...	...	...	
Tea	...	...	...	...	7 $\frac{1}{4}$
Macaroni	...	...	...	...	24
Assorted Toffee	...	...	...	...	15
Pickles	...	...	...	...	24
Pressed Beef	...	...	...	...	8
Corned Beef	...	...	...	...	177 $\frac{1}{2}$
				Total	2019

In addition, 1244 tins containing fish, fruit, vegetables, milk, etc., weighing 1296 lbs. were found to be unsound and unfit for human consumption.

All the above were disposed of in accordance with instructions from the Ministry of Food.

### PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

There were 269 notifications of infectious diseases, 8 being of Scarlet Fever and 210 of Measles. There were no cases of Diphtheria. Immunisation against this disease commenced in 1939 and although only 40.7 per cent. of the children under five are immunised the percentage among children of school age is 67.4.

#### Non-notifiable Infectious Diseases among school children.

Mumps	...	...	...	373
Chicken Pox	...	...	...	139
Ringworm	...	...	...	2
Scabies	...	...	...	—
German Measles	...	...	...	1
Influenza	...	...	...	29
				—
				544
				—

## NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

Disease.	Total Cases Notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital.	Total Deaths.
Food Poisoning ...	43	—	—
CerebroSpinal Fever...	—	—	—
Smallpox ...	—	—	—
Scarlet Fever ...	8	2	—
Diphtheria ...	—	—	—
Enteric Fever (includ- ing Paratyphoid) ...	—	—	—
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	1	—	—
Pneumonia ...	4	—	—
Erysipelas ...	—	—	—
Encephalitis			—
Lethargica ...	—	—	—
Poliomyelitis ...	2	2	—
Ophthalmia			
Neonatorum ...	—	—	—
Measles ...	210	—	—
Whooping Cough ...	1	—	—
Totals ...	269	4	—

NOTE—Figures for non-civilians are not included.

# AGE AT DATE OF NOTIFICATION.

Age.		Scarlet Fever	Diphtheria	Enteric Fever	Puerperal Pyrexia	Pneumonia	Erysipelas	Whooping Cough	Measles	Cerebro Spinal Fever	Ophthalmia Neonatorum	Acute Poliomyelitis	Food Poisoning
Under 1		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—
1 and under 2		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	—
2	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	—	—	—	—
3	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	21	—	—	—	—
4	5	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	26	—	—	—	—
5	10	4	—	—	—	—	—	1	98	—	—	1	—
10	15	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	—	—	—	43
15	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
20	35	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
35	45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
45	65	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
65 and over		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals		8	—	—	1	4	—	1	210	—	—	2	43

## TUBERCULOSIS.

AGE PERIODS.	Totals.	New Cases.				Totals.	Deaths.			
		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary			Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
		M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F
0 and under 1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1    "    "    5	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
5    "    "   10	2	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
10   "   "   15	3	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
15   "   "   20	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
20   "   "   25	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
25   "   "   35	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	3	—	—
35   "   "   45	2	—	1	1	—	1	1	1	—	—
45   "   "   55	3	2	1	—	—	2	2	—	—	—
55   "   "   65	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
65 and upwards	2	—	2	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
Total    ...*	16	4	6	4	2	9‡	4	5	—	—

\*Included in this total is one transfer from the mainland.

‡Includes one case who died from another disease.



